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ABSTRACT

This paper describes some of the substantive areas of role conflict between administrative and teaching personnel and suggests some strategies designed to resolve these conflicts that are viewed as a necessary and ongoing part of change. The areas of role conflict are identified as: a) the degree of expertise in educating students shown by administrators and teachers, b) the collision between the authority structure of the school and the professional role of the teaching staff, and c) the ambivalence toward the concept of leadership between administrative and teaching personnel. The suggested ways of resolving these conflicts are a) to define the role of the curriculum supervisor as a service function to teachers, b) to utilize the concept of empathy in role taking to help both parties understand as much as possible about the characteristic features of their respective positions, and c) to adopt norm setting conferences to consolidate and unlock emotions. (MBM)

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THE ADMINISTRATION OF TEACHING PERSONNEL:

IMPLICATIONS FOR A THEORY OF ROLE CONFLICT RESOLUTION

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Roles have frequently been identified with the rights and duties of a position within a social system as determined, in part, by various elements in society. At any given moment the life of the individual may be conceptualized as an array of roles which the individual plays in a distinct set of organizations and groups to which he belongs.[1] Moreover social psychologists and role theorists seem to agree that the expectations associated with these roles are essential for predicting behavior and that any item of behavior must always be placed in some self-other context.

In addition to the behavioral forces aroused by role expectations, another type of interaction which exists between the role and the self makes the study of roles a unique social psychological formulation.[2] Kahn, for example, speaks of internal forces which influence a person's role performance. Viewed from this perspective each individual responds to a set of expectations in terms of his own perceptions of them. In other words the individual acquires a unique conception of his position and a set of attitudes and beliefs about what he should and should not do while in that position.[3]

Various "significant others" in the environment may hold different role expectations which exert pressures to change the behavior of the role occupant. In such a situation an individual may find himself exposed to conflicting demands within a social system.[4] Interviews by Gross and others revealed that role performers are frequently exposed

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[1] Robert L. Kahn and others, Organizational Stress: Studies in Role Conflict and Ambiguity (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1964), p. 11

[2] Theodore Sorbin, "Role Theory," Handbook of Social Psychology, Gardner Lindzey, editor (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Addison Wesley Publishing Company, Inc., 1954), p. 225

[3] Kahn and others, op. cit., pp. 16-17

[4] Ibid., pp. 18-19

to incongruent expectations as occupants of a single position.[5] These opposing demands generate social psychological conflict the effect of which forces the role occupant to the point of deciding what is or is not appropriate in a given situation.

Since an educator's role performance may be determined to some extent by the community or larger society, expectations of pupils and parents and the demands of the school setting, there is likely to be present in his situation a degree of inconsistency or strain to one or more sets of expectations. Bates wrote that people find it difficult to live with such strain and in the long run will either be changed or eliminate one of the roles from the position in order to be consistant.[6] Gullahorn's study of role conflict supports the hypothesis that in role conflict situations there is an increasing tendency to view the dilemma unrealistically.[7] Getzels's and Guba's findings suggest that in actual practice one must commit himself in order to determine his actions at choice points, despite contrary expectations from other roles that he may simultaneously occupy.[8] However, as Seeman notes, the conflicting demands can never be completely and realistically fulfilled.[9] Role conflict behavior, therefore,

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[5] Neal Gross, Ward S. Mason and Alexander W. McEachern, Explorations in Role Analysis (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1958)

[6] Frederick L. Bates, "Position, Role, and Status: A Reformulation of Concepts," Social Forces, XXXIV (May, 1956), p. 315

[7] John T. Gullahorn, "Measuring Role Conflict," American Journal of Sociology, LXI (January, 1956), pp. 299-303

[8] J. W. Getzels and E. G. Guba, "Role, Role Conflict and Effectiveness: An Empirical Study," American Sociological Review, XIX (April, 1954), pp. 164-175

[9] Melvin Seeman, "Role Conflict and Ambivalence," American Sociological Review, XVIII (August, 1953), pp. 372-380

would be the person's continuous effort to adjust himself to varying amounts of stress within the situation.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a look at some of the substantive areas of role conflict between administrative and teaching personnel and to suggest some strategies designed to resolve these conflicts in the school setting. The tendency here is not to regard all conflict as bad or susceptible to complete elimination; rather, it is to view conflict as a necessary and ongoing part of change. Indeed, many contemporary social scientists have stressed the constructive and even unifying consequences of conflict relations in the area of human growth and development.[10]

According to the organizational model of public schools, teachers are employed for the purpose of imparting knowledge and skills to students.[11] The problem of certifying that teachers do perform in accordance with this role specification is not met by the specification of the role itself. Somewhere in the organization there must be ability to insure performance by teachers in accordance with their role specification. The administration may be conceived as a hierarchy of relationships for allocating and integrating roles personnel and facilities to achieve the goals of the system.[12]

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[10]See for example Ralph M. Goldman, "A Theory of Conflict and Organizational Offices," Journal of Conflict Resolution, (September, 1966), pp. 328-343

[11]Neal Gross, "Some Contributions of Sociology to the Field of Education," Harvard Educational Review, XXIX (Fall, 1959), p. 276

[12]J. W. Getzels and E. G. Guba, "Social Behavior and The Administrative Process," School Review, LXV (Winter, 1957) p. 424

Areas of Conflict

The degree of expertise in educating students is one of the basic conflicts underlying the role of administrators and teachers. It is apparent that the administration has the responsibility for educating students, however, the actual teaching is carried out by the teacher. The central conflict results from the actual teaching and the degree of expertise assumed by the teaching profession and the administration. According to Etzioni the expert deals with symbols and materials (ie., obtaining funds, financing activities and recruiting personnel) while the teachers typically deal with students. Furthermore, the two role types may require different personalities and backgrounds since experts have a higher education and are more committed to abstract ideas whereas, teachers more committed to the actual teaching.[13]

Teachers ordiniarily have autonomy (ie., responding or reacting independently of the whole). Moreover, the amount and scope of their autonomy results from their status as a professional worker.[14] Another source of stress is the collision between the authority structure of the school and the professional role of the teaching staff. According to Gross someone has to assign responsibilities, see that tasks are accomplished, and have the power to sanction teachers and students for deviant behavior. However, the authority structure conflicts with another characteristic of school organization since the school is staffed with professional personnel.

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[13]Amitai Etzioni, "Authority Structure and Organizational Effectiveness," Administrative Science Quarterly IV (June, 1959), p. 52.

[14]Fred E. Katz, "The School as a Complex Social Organization," Harvard Educational Review, XXXIV (Summer, 1964), p. 429

Gross goes on to say that this accounts for the social distance between teachers and principals and is undoubtedly reflected in the latent and overt opposition of teachers to the introduction of new educational ideas.[15]

Finally, leadership has been defined as the initiation of new structure or procedures for accomplishing organizational goals and objectives.[16] Generally, to say that a person displays leadership qualities is to assume that it is good or effective. According to Lipham there is an ambivalence toward leadership that is sensed but seldom expressed. He maintains that while administration and leadership have a great many factors in common they are not synonymous. The administration on the one hand is concerned with maintaining rather than changing established structure, procedures or goals. On the other hand leadership is concerned with initiating change in the established structure procedures or goals; he is disruptive of the existing state of affairs.[17] The author feels that in educational organizations the emphasis has not been upon the nature of the product of the school but upon how smoothly the school operates. They have failed to recognize that it is precisely these "happiness indices" that are jeopardized most by a given leadership act.[18]

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[15]Gross, op. cit., pp. 280-281.

[16]James M. Lipham, "Leadership and Administration," The Society's Committee on Behavioral Science and Educational Administration. The Sixty-third yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part II (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 120.

[17]Ibid., pp. 121-123.

[18]Ibid., p. 120.

Conflict Resolution

It is well known, of course, that people respond to objects or situations not in terms of objective reality but in terms of the particular way in which the object is perceived. According to Faris, there is no hope for a situation in which each person faces the world on his own mental equipment. In order to put forth their best efforts one must select, define, and standardize the definition of things and nonmaterial concepts to the extent that both parties share a common system of symbols.[19] Donald Super, in dealing with problems of adjustment to work requirements, substantiates the theory that role adjustment is best when the role is defined.[20] Of course, if one party is unable to accept the definition of the situation proposed by the other the easing of tension becomes almost impossible.

Babcock has provided an example of the emerging role of the teaching professional in the area of curricular decision. This example attempts to explain the role of the teacher as a professional person who seeks optimal autonomy specification while at the same time allowing the administrator to carry out his responsibilities. According to the author the leadership responsibility in curriculum development would lie with the curriculum supervisor. This does not mean that the initiation of curriculum change is the exclusive prerogative of the curriculum

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[19]Robert E. Faris, "Interaction Levels and Intergroup Relations," Intergroup Relations and Leadership, Muzafer Sherif, editor (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1962), pp. 30-31

[20]Donald Super, The Psychology of Careers, (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), p. 172

supervisor. Provision must be made in any organization for the initiation of change by teachers, principals, or the central administration. The supervision of curriculum development in the classroom is fundamentally a service function to teachers rather than an administrative one. The author believes that we have long recognized that the supervision of instruction in the classroom should be removed as far as possible from the authority "role." [21]

In addition to role definition discussed above, empathy in role taking can be utilized to help both parties to understand as much as possible about the characteristic features of their respective positions. Turner has identified a number of ways that empathy may be used. Traditionally empathy refers to a type of role taking in which the individual puts himself in the position of another and adopts his standpoint. Situationally, however, the individual may be forced to distinguish between understanding a role and adopting its standpoint. Sometimes empathy is simply used to designate the ability to understand the role of another while retaining his own personal detachment. And finally, empathy can be used to react to one's own behavior as others are reacting to it. [22] To make a choice among these usages would most certainly depend on the person's tendency and ability to

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[21]Chester D. Babcock, "The Emerging Role of the Curriculum Leader," Role of Supervisor and Curriculums Director in a Climate of Change, Robert Leeper, editor, (Washington D. C., The Association for Supervisor's and Curriculum Development, 1965), p. 60

[22]Ralph H. Turner, "Role Taking, Role Standpoint, and Reference Group Behavior," American Journal of Sociology, LXI (January, 1956), p. 326

empathize.

Through interviews and group discussion it is correct to assume that a "sufficiently objective picture" of the problem should arise. Blake and Mouton have proposed the adoption of norm setting conferences which are used to consolidate and unlock emotions. The participants actually talk through their own attitudes, reservations, doubts and so on in viewing cooperation. The authors feel that when other approaches to easing conflict fail, a final opportunity remains through these conferences.[23] Sherif has been careful to point out though that such contacts between groups must take place with the presence of superordinate goals which are urgent and compelling for all groups involved.[24]

Summary

This paper has presented a number of distinct areas of role conflict between administrative and teaching personnel with suggestions for reducing these conflicts in the school setting. The areas of role conflict consisted of: 1) the degree of expertise for educating students; 2) the authority structure and the teacher's professional status; and 3) the ambivalence toward the concept of leadership. The suggested means for resolving these conflicts were: 1) defining the role of the curriculum supervisor as a service function to teachers; 2) the concept of empathy in role taking; and 3) the adoption of norm leveling conferences.

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[23]Robert R. Blake and Jane S. Mouton, The Intergroup Dynamics of Win-Lose Conflicts and Problem-Solving Collaboration in Union-Management Relations," Intergroup Relations and Leadership, Muzafer Sherif, editor, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1962) pp. 110-111

[24]Muzafer Sherif, "Intergroup Relations and Leadership: Introductory Statement, : Intergroup Relations and Leadership, Muzafer Sherif, editor, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1962), p. 19

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